

Fort Collins Street Medicine Clinic: Development and Implementation of Student Run Free Clinic During Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship

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Abstract

People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) have higher morbidity and mortality, associated mental health and psychiatric illness, infectious diseases, age-related conditions and chronic cardiovascular and metabolic diseases compared to the housed population¹. PEH who are pet-owners experience increased barriers to care as healthcare facilities, among other public services like transportation and shelters, do not allow pets²⁻³. The Fort Collins Street Medicine Clinic (FCSMC) was created in conjunction with the Street Dog Coalition (SDC), a free veterinary services clinic for pets of PEH, and the Murphy Center, a day shelter for PEH, to provide greater access to care for this vulnerable population.

Introduction

Significance

- Larimer county has highest proportion of PEH homelessness outside of Denver and Colorado Springs⁴
- Up to 6% of PEH are pet-owners³
- PEH with pets have limited options for healthcare

Intervention Rationale

- Prior to FCSMC, there was no healthcare outreach targeting PEH with pets in Fort Collins
- With Fort Collins Medical School Branch, there is consistent pipeline of dedicated students to continue project

Goals of FCSMC

- Provide thoughtful primary care to pet-owning PEH in Fort Collins
- Address barriers to care for this population through engaged discourse
- Engage students early on in serving underserved through exposure to impactful primary care

Methodology

The FCSMC was created by third year medical students in a Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC). Development was led by medical students in conjunction with community organizations. Meetings with stakeholders, grant writing, administrative development and clinic hours were held in pre-scheduled LIC independent learning time.



Results

- Clinic operates weekly, serves 2-4 patients
- Services include: wound care, medication refills, referral for social services and to establish primary care
- Staffed by volunteer community physicians, advanced practice providers, medical students and undergraduate students
- Awarded grant from CUSOM for supplies
- Interdisciplinary case-based didactic sessions held with veterinary team at beginning of each session
- Very positive informal feedback from patients, volunteers and community stakeholders so far

Discussion

The FCSMC currently operates weekly. Services provided include wound care, medication refills, referring to social services, and establishing primary care appointments with community clinics. The FCSMC is staffed by volunteer community physicians, advanced practice providers, medical students, and undergraduate students.



Future Directions

- Expand scope of engagement beyond PEH with pets
 - Potential opportunity for backpack medicine
 - Mobile outreach via health district
- Incorporation of mental health services
- Research opportunities:
 - Investigate barriers to underutilization of medicaid
 - Quantitative analysis of disease prevalence amongst this population

Testimonials

From a Patient

"[FCSMC] is a very comfortable and calming environment where I feel like I am being listened to."

From a Student Volunteer

"This opportunity to engage with the community while honing my medical knowledge is very unique and led me to this project. I feel very happy to be engaged with this work!"

From an Attending Preceptor

"A unique and rewarding aspect of volunteering with the Street Medicine Clinic at Murphy Center has been the interface with Street Dog Coalition. It has been fascinating to be part of health care "at both ends of the leash", to learn more about zoonotic diseases, and to interact with both medical and veterinary students about common - and different - features of diagnosis and treatment of humans and other animals."

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